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# SCIENCE

FRIDAY, JANUARY 13, 1888.

WE HAVE THE GREATEST SYMPATHY with those educators who are endeavoring to secure the introduction of science-teaching into the public schools. We would advocate this addition to the present curriculum, not only because of the interest and value of scientific knowledge as such, but because of its value as general information. A great deal of that which is incorporated under the head of elementary science is really general information, and as such should be in the possession of every child in the grammar-schools of the country. We regard the little book entitled 'Introductory Steps in Science,' by the late Paul Bert, as invaluable in this connection, and the English translation should be in every school. Nowhere else are the facts stated as simply, as clearly, and as comprehensively as in this little book. That this subject is beginning to attract the attention which it deserves, is evident. At a recent meeting of the American Society of Naturalists at New Haven it was elaborately and enthusiastically discussed, and now a valuable impetus is to be given to this movement among the teachers themselves by the proposition of the *Academy*, which is one of the best journals of secondary education published in this or any other country, to give a prize of fifty dollars for the best essay on 'Science in Secondary Schools.' The effect of this offer will be to stimulate the teachers of the country to investigate the subject in its practical bearing. It is announced that the committee of awards will give no weight to essays that are merely arguments in favor of science-teaching. This is as it should be, for, unless this condition was made, the majority of the essays would be given over to the threshing of old straw. Contestants are requested to confine themselves simply to the practical exposition of the results arrived at in the schoolroom, and to the best means of obtaining these results. The competition is open to all persons, without regard, as the announcement puts it, "to age, sex, color, or previous condition of servitude," and no paper is to exceed five thousand words in length. All essays must be received at the office of the *Academy*, Syracuse, N.Y., on or before March 15, 1888. We cordially recommend this competition to all persons interested in science-teaching. It gives them an excellent opportunity to be of practical service to the public-school system of the country.

THE MEETING of the Engineers' Club of Philadelphia, Dec. 17, was another instance of the advantage of providing something to eat and smoke at scientific meetings. The secretary, in his report, states that he is glad to be able to announce that both members and guests seem to have been much pleased with their little entertainment. Whereas the usual attendance at the meetings may have varied from a dozen to twenty, the attendance at this meeting amounted to something like three hundred and forty-two. It was not possible to determine exactly. In this case there was no speech-making, or any attempt to introduce any feature which might have deprived the affair of an entirely informal and purely sociable character; but it is believed that the entertainment will be of permanent and substantial benefit to the club. The decline of the old scientific meetings is well illustrated in those held, or attempted to be held, by one of the oldest scientific associations of the country. This association, although it has maintained its existence for more than a hundred years, and has accumulated a library of scientific periodicals and Transactions of societies which is excelled by but one or two in this country, has found it impossible, since the opening of the present season last October, to bring together a

sufficient number to form a quorum for the transaction of any business; in other words, no new members have been elected, because fifteen out of the two hundred members of this society had never been sufficiently of one mind to attend its meetings, which are held in a building easily accessible to a very large proportion of them. This society has, as well, tried the social experiment once or twice, and with promising success; but it certainly seems, that, with the differentiation of the interest and work of scientific men, many of the older general scientific societies must develop some new field in which they may be of service. In large degree they are now publication societies, but, as is well known, there is a great disadvantage in the publication in one volume of a vast mass of heterogeneous material. It frequently amounts to a mere burying of the results.

## MODERN-LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION.

THE fifth annual convention of the Modern-Language Association was held under the auspices of the University of Pennsylvania on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, Dec. 28-30. The large attendance of delegates, chiefly from the East and South, but some also from the West, was gratifying as indicative of the steady growth of the organization. But all who came were amply repaid, for the proceedings were both interesting and instructive. The sessions were opened on Wednesday evening with an address of welcome by Provost Pepper of the university, who was followed by Prof. James MacAllister, superintendent of the public schools of Philadelphia. Professor MacAllister spoke on the place of modern literature in the education of our time. It was a discussion of the topic which at present is engaging the attention of pedagogues all over the world, whether the classics should continue to remain the basis of a liberal education or not. Professor MacAllister ranged himself clearly and openly on the side of those who favored the substitution of modern literatures as such a basis in place of the study of Latin and Greek. After tracing the origin of the system of education which was still in vogue in all parts of the universe fifty years ago, to the revival of classical learning in the days of the Renaissance, he argued, that while it was natural for the men of the fifteenth century to go to the classics for satisfying their sense of beauty and their desire for knowledge, for it was the Latin and Greek authors who had set these aspirations and desires in motion, there is no sufficient reason why we, in our days, should go to the same fountain for quenching our thirst. With the achievements of modern nations in the realms of philosophy, poetry, science, and literature, it is strange that we should continue to train the intellect and to stimulate the heart almost exclusively upon works access to which is possible only after prolonged and laborious study of the languages in which they are treasured up. It is true that much has been done during the past decades towards dethroning the classics from the supreme rulership which they formerly exercised. After a good deal of fighting, science has found a place in our system of education, and it is conceded that any scheme of instruction is incomplete that does not provide for the teaching of modern languages; but the controversy is by no means ended. Professor MacAllister claimed that the modern literatures of the world contained all the elements necessary for attaining the aim of culture, which is to "know ourselves and the world," and that sooner or later they must be given the first place in the intellectual culture of our time, and be made the chief instruments of literary training in the schools.

On Thursday morning, after the transaction of routine business, the reading and discussion of papers began, and continued, with an intermission of one hour at noon, until late in the afternoon. The papers on this and the following day were of two kinds, — some of a technical character, giving the results of detailed investigations of some special subject; and others of a more general character,